

Philosophiae Doctor (Honoris Causa) – Socio-Gerontology

Professor Monica Ferreira

Professor Monica Ferreira (DPhil, University of Pretoria) is one of two most prominent first generation exponents of research and development of policy on ageing in Africa. She not only pioneered the field in Africa but also contributed to the international mainstreaming and expansion of research on ageing in Africa as one of the major challenges that will face the globe in the 21st Century.

- It is Monica Ferreira who tirelessly put on the social agenda the imperative of ageing research in Africa. She drew our attention to the fact that population ageing is not only a developed world challenge but it will equally impact on the developing world, Africa included: today, almost two-thirds (62%) of the 868 million people in the world older than 60 years live in developing countries; this proportion is expected to increase to 80% in 2050.
- It is she who pondered on intergenerational equity and justice in light of the fact that in sub-Saharan Africa people will age in the youngest of all regions: how will resource allocation be distributed between the generations in these young regions?
- It is she who advocated a paradigm shift for older persons not to be necessarily seen as a burden or a problem but to acknowledge their considerable contributions, especially in South Africa in terms of the redistribution of their pensions to younger generations but also their care roles with regard to HIV/AIDS infected and affected children and grandchildren.

To this end she established the National Research Programme on Ageing at the Human Sciences Research Council based in Pretoria in 1984. The programme was the first coordinated research effort on ageing in South Africa. The main purpose of the programme was to stimulate and fund research on ageing in South Africa. The programme had a prolific publishing strategy and among the numerous publications to emanate in the 1980s was an edited volume on Ageing in South Africa: social research papers (Ferreira, Gillis and Møller (eds.), 1989).

In 1991, the programme evolved into the HSRC/UCT Centre for Gerontology at the University of Cape Town with Professor Ferreira appointed as the first Director. This only such centre in Africa became the informational and coordinating focal point for research on ageing in Africa. Not only did she integrate research on ageing into academia, she also contributed to the development of policy on ageing in the changing South African context. It is during this period that she founded the hugely influential *Southern African Journal of Gerontology* (1992–2001) of which she was the first editor. This Journal put research on ageing in Africa on the international map. The centre was later renamed and is now known as The Albertina and Walter

Sisulu Institute of Ageing in Africa within the Department of Medicine at the University of Cape Town.

During the 2000s her contribution to African gerontology extended deeper into the continent and beyond Africa during which time she has developed an extensive global network of gerontologists and organisations. She not only contributed to pan-African policy on ageing but played a major role as consultant to the United Nations (on elder abuse, and HIV/AIDS and older persons) and the World Health Organization (on a minimum data set on ageing and older persons in sub-Saharan Africa, health evaluation in older Africans, and ageing and community health concepts). She was a member of the UN Technical Committee to draft the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 on which the current Act on Older Persons in South Africa is based; a member of the African Union Expert Group to draft the AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing 2003; served as advisor to the UN International Institute of Ageing (INIA); on UN expert groups to draft a UN/International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics Global Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century and an Africa regional research agenda; and several other expert and advisory groups. She also served on the Board of Directors of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) and the Panel on Ageing in Developing Countries of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSPP).

On the foundation that Professor Ferreira laid over two decades, the United Nations-endorsed African Research on Ageing Network (AFRAN) was established in 2005 at the University of Oxford. This network of which she was a founding member and on which Steering Committee she served, contributed and still does to the coordination and mainstreaming of the research endeavour in Africa. Towards the end of her formal career Professor Ferreira was honoured by Dr Robert Neil Butler to head the only International Longevity Centre (ILC) in Africa. ILC South Africa is one of 17 such centres in the ILC Global Alliance network with an aim to help societies to address longevity and population ageing in positive and productive ways, typically using a life course approach, highlighting older people's productivity and contributions to family and society as a whole. Professor Ferreira still actively contributes as Honorary President of ILC SA after she had served as Co-President of the Global Alliance with Baroness Sally Greengross (UK).

After her retirement Monica was instrumental in curating the Directory of Research on Ageing in Africa: 1995-2003, as well as the follow-up Directory of Research on Ageing in Africa: 2004-2015. She featured heavily in both - directly, with her research and publications - and indirectly through her intellect, assured guidance of younger researchers, and clear-minded opinions about the need for African research on ageing. An acknowledgement in the more recent report suggests the extent of

Monica's impact: "*Special acknowledgement is due to Monica Ferreira and Nana Araba Apt, leaders in research on ageing in Africa, who graciously mentored and encouraged subsequent generations of ageing researchers and advocates.*"

As one of the founding scholars- and most significant figures in the field of ageing in Africa the exceptional achievements of Professor Ferreira deserve to be honoured. Her focus on nurturing not only relevant, but also excellent African research to enhance the well-being and inclusion of vulnerable older populations resonates fully with the dream of North-West University: engaged scholarship with a commitment to social justice on the African continent and beyond.

North-West University is greatly honoured to confer the degree Philosophiae Doctor Honoris Causa on Professor Monica Ferreira in recognising her attributes:

- **As being a most prominent first-generation exponent of research and development of policy on ageing in Africa;**
- **As a skilful negotiator and connector of local and global worlds, driving a recognition of African ageing issues on the international stage;**
- **For not only pioneering scholarship on ageing in Africa, but also contributing internationally to the expansion of research on population ageing as one of the major challenges that will face the globe in the 21st century.**
- **As an activist for the everyday (often unrecognised) contributions made by millions of older persons for country, community and significant others;**
- **As a nuanced translator of research into policy and practice;**
- **Above all, as a wise Nkuku¹ and mentor to numerous second and third generation scholars of ageing research across the continent and the world.**

¹ 'Grandmother' from Setswana